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Concubine

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concubine A woman taken as a mistress to avoid producing legitimate offspring.

Roman concubinage was a monogamous union typically lasting for years. Affluent young males often kept a concubine until they married a woman of their own social status (e.g. Aug. *conf.* 4.2.2, 6.12.21–6.15.25). Concubines were typically slaves or freedwomen, while freeborn women are rarely attested. The church disapproved of concubinage but could not stop it. Many Christian authors advised that young men should reject the lowborn concubine rather than marry her. Some men wanted to leave property to their concubine and illegitimate offspring, but this was considered immoral and was legally restricted, esp. by Constantine (*CTh.* 4.6). Justinian improved the position of concubines and their children. In the post-Roman west, concubinage continued to flourish. Compulsory celibacy created concerns about clerical concubinage in the 6th cent.

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Arjava *Women* 205–18.

Evans Grubbs *Women* 150–4, 166–76.

149 words

Abbreviations used not in current list:

Arjava *Women* = A. Arjava, *Women and Law in Late Antiquity* (1996).

Evans Grubbs *Women* = J. Evans Grubbs, *Women and the Law in the Roman Empire: A sourcebook on marriage, divorce and widowhood* (2002).

Possible cross references:

Constantine

Justinian